

My name is Libby Morrison and I am a 16 year old living in Stonington, CT. On my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, I wanted to give blood but found out that in Connecticut, the minimum age for blood donation is 17. After further research, I found that the minimum age in Rhode Island, 3 miles down the road from my house, was 17. I found a blood drive in Westerly, Rhode Island and, after my mom signed the consent form, donated blood. Since then, I have been a blood donor in Rhode Island four times. When deciding to allow 16-year olds to donate, the Rhode Island Blood Center examined the experiences of other blood collection centers that have accepted 16-year-old donors for many years, and found that reaction rates are not different from those of 17-year-old donors. Currently, more than 30 other states allow 16-year-olds to donate, including both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Some states have increased the minimum weight requirements to assure that there no adverse reactions, although there is no evidence of 16-year-olds having a higher rate of adverse reactions.

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the American Red Cross posted on their website that blood donations are at their lowest level in 15 years. Thousands of blood donations are needed every day to help treat accident victims, cancer patients, people having surgery, children with blood disorders, burn patients and so many others. The Red Cross estimates that if just two more people above the number expected at a collection donated blood through the rest of the summer, there would be enough on the shelves to meet patient needs. ([www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org))

By becoming a blood donor at an early age, many of these students will carry on donating blood throughout their lifetime. For many students like me, their high school blood drive could be their first exposure to this important act of giving and the opportunity to give blood during a high school blood drive could potentially increase the number of donations in Connecticut to help allieviate the blood shortage.

Thank you for supporting this important bill,

Elizabeth (Libby) Morrison

77 Briarpatch Road

Stonington CT